IX. *A Letter from the Revd. Mr.* Tho. Steward, *V. D. M. to Dr.* Mortimer, *Secr.* R. S. *concerning the Virtues of the* Star of the Earth, CORONOPUS, *or* Bucks-horn Plantain, *in the Cure of the Bite of the Mad-Dog. See* Tranſ. N° 443. *p.* 319. *and* 360.

Bury St. Edmund's,
Nov. 1. 1738.

Honoured SIR,

HAVING met with a Paragraph in the Hiſtory of the Works of the Learned for *July* laſt, in which the Author takes Notice of a Paſſage in the laſt publiſhed *Philoſophical Tranſaction,* relating to ſome Vegetables ſaid to have great Virtue for the Prevention of that terrible Malady called the *Hydrophobia, viz.* The *Lichen cinereus terreſtris,* and an Herb called, *Stellaria,* or *Star of the Earth*; as to the latter of which, at leaſt, I apprehend there muſt have been a Miſtake, (though an involuntary and unavoidable one, through the Defect or Confuſion of the Memoirs made uſe of) and a putting of *quid pro quo* (as 'tis commonly expreſs'd): On this Occaſion I drew up a Letter to the ſaid Author, in which I attempted the Rectification of it, happening to have ſome Materials by me, proper (as I thought) for ſuch a Purpoſe: But conſidering that what he writes is but an Extract from what was publiſhed by you as Secretary to the ROYAL SOCIETY, I conceived that it would better become me to addreſs you more immediately,

diately, as more expreſſive of Reſpect both to yourſelf, and to that very Honourable and Learned SOCIETY, to which you are ſo nearly related. And ſince the Draught of what I judged fit to ſend the afore-mentioned Author, (and which I have choſen to ſuppreſs) I have endeavoured to get ſome further Light into the Affair, by a Converſation with my worthy Friend Dr. *S. Dale* of *Braintree*, (well known to ſeveral of the Virtuoſi, and one of whoſe ingenious Letters I find publiſhed in *Phil. Tranſ.* N° 444.) who fully concurs with me in his Sentiments, as to the Subject of this Letter. In his well-furniſhed Botanic Library, I met with ſeveral things which are *Deſiderata* in my own much meaner one, that greatly contributed towards the Elucidation of what has been ſtrangely obſcured by an odd and unaccountable Complication or Accumulation of Miſtakes, grounded upon Narratives in which there ſeem to me to be diverſe Inconſiſtencies, and Miſrepreſentations of Matters of Fact, through Inadvertency or Lapſe of Memory, or Anachroniſms, by which my once very dear Friend and kind Correſpondent, Mr. *Ray*, (whoſe Name and Memory muſt ever be precious to all Lovers of ſolid Learning) was himſelf led into a Miſtake (and became the innocent Occaſion of leading others into the ſame) about the laſt-mentioned Vegetable, which he took to be *the Star of the Earth*, mentioned by *Grey*, as a ſovereign Remedy againſt the Bite of a Mad-Dog; but was afterwards convinced, that it was not ſo, as will evidently appear from what follows, in which I have done what in me lies to get to the Bottom of the Matter, and to extricate it out of that

Maze

Maze in which it has pretty long lain hid, by the Help of the beſt Clue that I could poſſibly find.

Having made the Study of Botany the agreeable Amuſement of my younger Years, I was very much puzzled with what I met with in the Appendix to the 2d Volume of the General Hiſtory of Plants, compiled by the Reverend and Learned Gentleman but now mentioned (who was pleaſed to honour and favour me both with his Friendſhip, and Epiſtolary Correſpondence) concerning the *Spaniſh Catch-fly*, which he there affirms (*p.* 1895.) to be *the Star of the Earth*, ſo famous for the Prevention of the *Hydrophobia*; whereas I always (before I read this Aſſertion in Mr. *Ray*) took the *Coronopus*, or *Buckshorn Plantain*, to be the true *Star of the Earth*, and do ſtill believe it ſo to be, for the Reaſons that will occur to you in the Sequel.

Being deſirous to know what Grounds Mr. *Ray* had for aſcribing ſuch Virtue to the *Catch-fly*, I wrote a Letter to him, dated ſo long ago as *Dec.* 1. 1698. in which (among ſeveral other Particulars that would be impertinent to mention) I requeſted of him to tell me what his Sentiments were at that time upon this Subject. My Words were theſe, *viz.*

[Opinionem tuam de Herba illa a Grayo in ſua Hippatrice Memorata, quam Stellam Terræ vocat, & ad morſum canis rabidi efficaciſſimam eſſe aſſerit, ſcire exopto. Stirpes duæ (ut videtur) hoc nomine inſigniuntur, viz. Plantago illa foliis laciniatis Coronopus dicta, & Lychnis viſcoſa flore muſcoſo, ſive Seſamoides Salamanticum magnum. Prior in Comitatu Norfolcienci magno in pretio habetur, & in caſu prædicto (nec ſine certo ſucceſſu) ſemper fere in uſum venit.

venit. Poſterior autem paucis innoteſcit, nec ab ullis mihi notis unquam uſurpata fuit. Tu vero authoritate Domini Edwardi Hulſii (viri ſane clariſſimi) nixus, in Appendice ad Hiſt. Generalem, hanc eſſe Plantam a Grayo tantopere laudatam aſſeris; ſed in Synopſi Stirpium Britannicarum nihil de Herbæ hujuſce viribus ſcribis; laudes autem, quibus hanc ornabas, in Coronopum retuliſti. Quæro igitur abs te, num ſententiam tuam mutâſti? Et D. Hulſium de hac planta deceptum fuiſſe nunc arbitraris? Ego ſane dubius & incertus hæreo. Grayus ipſe nullum aliud nomen præter Stellam Terræ herbæ, quam adeo magnificat, impoſuit, neque (in illa ſaltem Editione, quam mihi videre contigit) deſcriptionem ullam, notamve characteriſticam addidit, qua Planta hæc laudatiſſima aliis innoteſceret. Neſcio autem quomodo D. Hulſius tam certo ſciret Grayum ad Lychnidem prædictam reſpexiſſe, eamque nomine illo deſignâſſe. An Lychnis hæc tantis pollet viribus, ego quidem multum dubito; quod autem tu mihi hunc eximas ſcrupulum, (ut phraſi Pliniana utar) hoc impenſius cupio.]

To this Inquiry that good communicative Gentleman condeſcended to return the following free and ingenuous Anſwer, in *Engliſh* (though part of his Letter was in the ſame Language with mine).

[As to your pertinent Queſtion concerning the Plant called *Star of the Earth*, the Caſe ſtands thus: King *James* ſent to the ROYAL SOCIETY a Sample of a Plant dried, which was ſent him for that which cured his Dogs when bitten with a Mad-Dog, and by the Name of *the Star of the Earth*. This Plant not being well dried and preſerved, none of the ROYAL SOCIETY knew certainly what to make of;

ſo

ſo they ſent it to me, who, upon careful Examination of it, found it to be the *Seſamoides Salamanticum Magnum*; whereupon Dr. *Hulſe* ſending me that Obſervation out of *Gray*, concerning the Uſe of the Plant called *the Star of the Earth*, I thought I had Ground enough to attribute the Virtue of curing the *Hydrophobia* to the *Seſamoides Salamanticum*, not imagining that any would dare to abuſe a Sovereign Prince, by ſending him a falſe Plant. But afterwards, conſidering that the *Coronopus* was, for its Reſemblance to a Star, called *the Star of the Earth*, and that it was noted for ſuch a Virtue, but the *Seſamoides* was neither like a Star, nor by any ſo called, nor deſcribed to have ſuch a Quality; I concluded, that the Plant which *Gray* meant, was the *Coronopus* and not the *Seſamoides*, and that we had been abuſed by a falſe Plant ſent to King *James*, for *the Star of the Earth*.]

This Account from Mr. *Ray* himſelf fully ſatisfied me, that the *Bucks-horn*, and not the *Catch-fly*, was the true *Star of the Earth*. But as to the curing of King *James*'s Hounds, I ſuſpect that Mr. *Ray* was miſinformed as to that Matter, and am now almoſt perſuaded, that there was never ſuch a thing; for I cannot but obſerve, that there is a moſt perplexing Inconſiſtency between the two Extracts which have been given from the Journal-Books of the ROYAL SOCIETY, relating to this Matter of Fact. The Words are theſe, in the laſt Page of the laſt-publiſhed *Tranſaction*, N° 443. *p.* 360. *viz.*

[*Nov.* 16. 1671. Sir *R. Moray* exhibited a certain Plant, (which by Mr. *Ray* is called *Lichen cinereus terreſtris*) ſaid by Sir *R. M.* to be very good to cure Dogs bitten by a Mad-Dog; his Royal Highneſs

having cauſed it to be given to a whole Kennel of Dogs bitten by a Mad one, which were all cured, except one of them, to whom none of it was given. The Specimen was kept in the Repoſitory.]

Quære, Whether it be there ſtill?

[Afterwards, *viz. March* 1671-2. Sir *R. M.* mentioned, That a whole Kennel of Dogs belonging to his Royal Highneſs, were bitten by a Mad-Dog, and had been lately cured by an Herb called *Stellaria*, or *Star of the Earth*. This Plant is the *Lych. viſc. flore muſcoſo, C. B.* in *Engliſh, Spaniſh Catch-fly*: See theſe *Tranſactions*, N° 187. where is a Receipt to cure Mad-Dogs, wherein this Plant is a principal Ingredient, which Receipt, communicated by Sir *R. Gourdon*, was there publiſhed by his Majeſty's ſpecial Command, *An.* 1687.]

Now, Sir, here are two very different Accounts from the ſame Perſon, relating to the ſame Thing. In the firſt, Sir *R. M.* ſpeaks of the Cure as performed by the *Lichen*; in the ſecond, in leſs than half a Year after the other, he mentions it as done by the *Stellaria*. Now it ſeems utterly improbable, that the Kennel of Hounds ſhould be twice bitten, and cured by a different Plant in ſo ſhort a Space: And indeed (as I hinted before) my preſent Opinion is, that the Hounds were never bit by a Mad-Dog at all, but that the whole Story has been founded upon an older one, of which there is Mention made in that Book written by *T. de Grey*, Eſq; called *The expert Farrier*, in the 2d Edition of which, in 4^to^, publiſhed in 1652. among other Cures for the Bite of a Mad-Dog, he preſcribes this which follows, *p.* 160.

[Take

[Take the Herb which groweth in dry and barren Hills, called *the Star of the Earth*; you muſt give it three Days together. The firſt time you muſt gather three of theſe Herbs, with all the whole Roots; and waſh them clean, and pound them well; which done, give them to your Horſe in Milk, Beer, Ale, or White-wine, but be careful the Horſe takes all the Herbs and Roots: If you will, you may make up theſe Herbs and Roots in freſh or ſweet Butter, which will do as well. The ſecond Day give your Horſe five of theſe Herbs and Roots, as before; and the third Day give him ſeven. Do this punctually, and you may be well aſſured your Horſe will be perfectly cured; for albeit I myſelf have never tried this Medicine, yet I do know, the Party of whom I had this Cure, hath cured much Cattle of all Sorts therewith. I myſelf can ſay thus much of this Receipt, That I knew it cure an whole Kennel of Hounds of a Gentleman's, one Beagle excepted, which they did not ſuſpect to be bitten, which indeed was bitten; ſo he fell mad and died, but all the reſt eſcaped. Another time, a Gentleman's Son of my Acquaintance was unfortunately bitten, who was cured by the Party who taught me this Receipt; and this young Gentleman (who was then a Boy of 10 Years old) was ſo far ſpent with the Rancor of the Diſeaſe, before this Man took him in hand, as that his Head began to be addle, and he to talk very idly; yet he cured him, ſo as he lived and did well, and is at this Hour living, and a very proper and handſome Man, *&c.*]

Thus far *de Grey*. Now, Sir, I am apt to think, that any one who conſiders what he ſays about the Kennel of Hounds, will be ready to conclude, that

theſe were what Sir *R. M.* miſtook for the Duke of *York*'s Dogs, as ſeems plain from the remarkable Circumſtance of the one Beagle that had none of the Plant given him, mentioned in both the Stories. So ſtrangely may Errors ariſe, and be multiplied, by jumbling the Ideas of different things together in the Minds and Memories of Men, how wiſe and learned ſoever. So far as I can find, all the Concern King *James* had in this Affair, was his ſending a Plant to the ROYAL SOCIETY, which his Huntſman recommended as an excellent Remedy for the Bite of a Mad-Dog; and it ſeems to me very likely, that the Huntſman might have met with this Story in *Grey*, and told it to his Maſter, and this he might tell to Sir *R. M.* and it may be, the Man, to ſet out the Virtues of the Medicine the more, might tell the Duke, that ſeveral of his own Hounds were cured by it, whether it were really ſo or not. None of theſe Suppoſitions are impoſſible, nor, in my poor Judgment, very improbable.

To make this dark Affair appear in a ſtill clearer Light, let me deſire you to compare and conſider the following Extracts. In a Letter to Mr. *Ray* from Mr. *Aubry*, publiſhed by Mr. *Derham*, and dated *Aug.* 5. 1691. there is this Paragraph, *p.* 250. [King *James* ſent by Sir ——*Garden* (I ſuppoſe it ſhould have been *Gourdon*) to the ROYAL SOCIETY, a Plant called *Star of the Earth*, with the Receipt made of it, to cure the Bite of a Mad-Dog, which is in *Tranſactions* N° 187.] This refers to a Receipt communicated by Sir *R. Gourdon*, by his Majeſty's Command, and in which there is mention of *the Star of the Earth*, and to which this *N. B.* is added, [The Plant in

in this Receipt, and which is the chief Ingredient, is known among Botaniſts by the Name of *Seſamoides Salamanticum* of *Parkinſon*, or *Lychnis viſcoſa*, *&c.* of *Bauhine*, *Anglicè Spaniſh Catch-fly*. It grows plentifully about *Thetford*, &c. *Vide Raii Cat. Pl. Angl. & Hiſt. Pl.* Tom. 2do. *inter Lychnides.*] This ſeems grounded upon what Mr. *Ray* was afterwards perſuaded to be a Miſtake.

The next thing I ſhall beg your Attention to, is a Letter from Sir *Hans Sloane*, the now very Honourable Preſident of the ROYAL SOCIETY, to Mr. *Ray*; prior indeed in Time to the former, being dated *June* 1. 1687. in theſe Words: [Sir, I ſend you incloſed the Specimen of a Plant growing on *Newmarket-Heath*, and in *Surrey*, known by the Name of *the Star of the Earth* in thoſe Parts. It is particularly taken Notice of on the Account of its extraordinary and admirable Virtue, in curing the biting of Mad-Dogs, either in Beaſts or Men. One of his Majeſty's Huntſmen having proved it a great many times, gave the King his way of uſing it, which was an Infuſion in Wine with Treacle, and one or two more Simples. His Majeſty was pleaſed to communicate it to *Greſham-College*, to the ROYAL SOCIETY; and nobody knowing the Plant by that Name, ſome there preſent confirming its Uſe in ſome Parts of *England* in that Diſeaſe, the Herb being as little known here as if it came from the *Indies*, I told the SOCIETY, I would let you have the beſt Specimen of it, which I queſtion not is known to you. If you pleaſe to give your Sentiments, you will extremely oblige, *&c.*] To this Mr. *Ray* returned the following Anſwer: [Sir, I received your Letter

Letter with the Specimen encloſed, which ſeems to me to be the *Seſamoides Salamanticum Magnum* of *Cluſius*, or *Lychnis viſc. &c.* of *Bauhine*, which I have obſerved to grow plentifully upon *Newmarket Heath*, *&c.* I wonder it ſhould have ſuch a Virtue as you mention, but it ſeems it is well atteſted. Dr. *Hulſe* writes to me, he finds it in *Grey*'s Farrier.] This ſeems pretty evidently to refer to the ſame Plant mentioned by *Aubry*, and this ſurely was the Plant that not being well dried and preſerved, the SOCIETY could not tell what to make of, and which Mr. *Ray* found to be the *Seſamoides*, which he then thought was the Plant that *Grey* called *the Star of the Earth*; but upon further Conſideration, he was firmly perſuaded, that the *Coronopus*, and not the *Seſamoides*, was the Plant intended by *de Grey* (for ſo his Name ought to be written): And indeed, to me there ſeems to be the greateſt Probability, if not abſolute Certainty, of this latter Opinion; for the *Seſamoides* was a Plant ſo little known in *Grey*'s Time, that the Botaniſts who were cotemporary with him, took it for a Plant that was wholly a Stranger in *England*, as may be ſeen in *Johnſon* upon *Gerard* and in *Parkinſon* and the Manner of giving it, as directed by *Grey*, *viz.* firſt three, then five, and then ſeven Plants, Roots and all, ſpeaks it to be a ſmall Herb, ſuch as is the *Coronopus*, and not ſuch a large one, with a big, ſticky or woody Root, as the *Seſamoides*. This I am very ſure of, that in *Norfolk*, my native County, (and which, if I miſtake not, was *Grey's* alſo) the *Coronopus* is called *the Star of the Earth* (and among other Names given it by *Dodonæus*, this of *Stellaria*, and *Stella Terræ*, is one, *p.* 95. of the *Engliſh* Tranſlation; and he deſcribes it as lying ſpread upon the Ground like a Star; and

Gerard

Gerard gives the ſame Deſcription of it, and *Parkinſon*, in his *Theatrum*, yet more fully, *p.* 501. *viz.* That the Leaves lie round about the Root in Order one by another, thereby reſembling the Form of a Star, and therefore called *Herba Stella*; by which Name, among others, it is called by *Cæſalpinus*, *Lobel*, *&c.* But who ever met with the Name *Stellaria*, or *Stella Terræ*, among the *Synonyma* of the *Seſamoides* in any Botanic Writer before Mr. *Ray*, who afterwards retracted it, as has been fully proved?). In that Part of *Norfolk* where I was born, not far from *Norwich*, towards the Sea-coaſt, where the *Bucks-horn* Plant grows abundantly, there was great Uſe made of it when I was but a Lad, and always with good Succeſs, ſo far as ever I could hear. One Story I can tell of my own Knowledge, which may ſeem too trifling to mention, were it not to ſhew the Efficacy of the Simple. About 40 Years ago, when I lived at a Place called *Debenham* in *Suffolk*, a Perſon unknown to me, having heard that I knew an Herb that was good againſt the Bite of a Mad-Dog, ſent to deſire a Sample of it, with Directions how to uſe it; and ſome time after I had half a Dozen fine Chickens brought me. I asked whence they came? It was anſwered from ſuch a one (the Name I have now forgot). I ſaid I did not know him: To which the Reply was, That it was the Man to whom I had ſent the *Plantain*, which had ſaved the Lives of half a dozen Hogs of his, that had been bitten by a Mad Dog; and he thought the leaſt he could do was to ſend me half a Dozen Chickens as a Token of his Gratitude. After all, I will not be poſitive, that the *Lychnis*, or *Catch-fly*, is not good *contra morſum Canis rabidi*; but I

am

am confident that it is not the true *Star of the Earth.*

You ſee, Sir, I have taken a good deal of Pains to trace this Matter through all its intricate Meanders. I have been forced, indeed, to deal pretty much in Gueſſes and Conjectures, which I am not very fond of; but as the Caſe ſtands, it could not well be avoided: And I ſhall be glad, if by this Means we may be got (as I hope we are) near the Truth, which is the thing I aim at in this long Purſuit; and I have rode more than 50 Miles in this wet winter Seaſon, (though *ferè Septuagenarius*) in order to diſentangle it from the Confuſion and Contradiction in which it has been involved. Whether you will judge my Labour *tanti*, I know not; but if you ſhall be ſo favourable to me, as to think any thing that comes from ſo mean and obſcure a Perſon, worthy of the Notice of that very learned Body, at whoſe Board you have the Honour to ſit as Secretary, you may be pleaſed to communicate the ſame at ſome Meeting of the SOCIETY, as a well-meant Attempt (how weakly ſoever managed) to clear up, in ſome meaſure, what has been long clouded by dark and diſagreeing Accounts. If any doubt ſhould be made with reſpect to my Integrity, or Exactneſs in the Extract I have given you from Mr. *Ray*'s Letter, the Original is ſtill in Being, and ſhall be produced, if deſired.

As for the *Liverwort*, I can ſay nothing from my own Knowledge; but by the Account of its Virtues given by *Dampier*, (which he took for a kind of *Jew's-ear*, but which that very venerable Gentleman, and illuſtrious Ornament of the ROYAL SOCIETY, Sir *Hans Sloane*, with great Reaſon affirmed to be the *Lichen*

Lichen cinereus terreſtris) and publiſhed in the *Philoſophical Tranſactions*, N° 237. I cannot doubt but it is a potent Remedy, of which I preſume there may have been ſeveral ſucceſsful Experiments made, ſince thoſe made by *Dampier*'s Uncle, which are very conſiderable. And it may be King *James* might have ſome of his Hounds cured by this *Lichen*, after he came to the Crown, and might then ſend a Specimen thereof alſo to the SOCIETY.

I muſt here reſtrain my Pen from being further tedious, and beg Pardon for giving you the Trouble of ſo long a Scrawl, and for ſaying ſo much that may look like a περιαυτολογία, though the Occaſion is ſuch as will, I hope, plead my Excuſe. In ſo perplexed an Affair, I could not tell how to repreſent my Senſe in a ſmaller Compaſs; and I wiſh I may have done it to your Satisfaction, and that of the learned Gentlemen, who, I doubt not, frequently receive Accounts from better Hands, far more worthy of their Attention in Matters Phyſical, Philoſophical, *&c.* than any thing that I am capable of producing; but as 'tis commonly ſaid, *In magnis voluiſſe ſat eſt*; and I am free to impart what little I do underſtand, that may have the leaſt Tendency to promote Natural Knowledge, and be any way ſerviceable to the Public, eſpecially in Caſes where Life and Health are concerned, thoſe precious ineſtimable Jewels, and moſt valuable Gifts of Divine Bounty. The Practice of Phyſic is not indeed my Profeſſion, though I have looked a little by way of Diverſion into the Theory, but in *Communi periculo omnis homo Miles*; and ſhall think myſelf very happy, if any thing I have here communicated may prove in the loweſt Degree advantageous

and uſeful. I have not been very ſolicitous about Words, all that I aimed being only to make my Meaning known: The Nature of the Subject would not, indeed, well admit of the Decorations of Art and Style, had I been capable of giving them to it. *Ornari res ipſa negat, contenta doceri.*

I am,

SIR,

With great Reſpect,

Your very humble Servant,

Tho. Steward.

P. S.

A Friend of mine lately informed me, that there was a wonderful Cure performed upon a Woman in this County, ſeveral Years ago, who had been bitten by a Mad-Dog, and in whom the evident Symptoms of the *Hydrophobia* appeared, who yet was ſaved, by GOD's Bleſſing, upon the Uſe of a Powder given by the Direction of the Lady *Brook* (a Perſon of Eminence formerly in *Suffolk*). It ſeems the Powder went by the Name of *The Lady* Brook's *Powder*, and was generally ſuppoſed to be chiefly, if not only, the *Coronopus* dried and pulverized: And I muſt own, that I have at preſent ſuch an Opinion of the great Virtue of this Simple, that till I have ſome convincing Evidence of its having failed, I can ſcarce avoid looking upon it as a Specific *contra morſum canis rabidi*; and I heartily wiſh, for the ſake of ſuch as ſhall at any time happen to fall under ſo terrible a Misfortune, that it may be proved by Experience ſo to be.